DDA 81-0913

30 APR 1981

Mr. Robert Steele
Federal Marketing Operations
Wang Corporation
4550 Montgomery Avenue
Bethesda, MD   20014

Dear Mr. Steele:

Your presentations were excellent and much appreciated.
It was a lot to cover in a day, and the interest was obviously
high on our part.

Personally, the areas I would like to have heard more
about were your plans for a graphics capability in the WP
environment and a more specific approach towards reliability,
availability and maintainability--including some specific
numbers. Given your strong market position, there must be
some competitive tests that you would like to brag about,
such as might have been conducted by the GSA or one of
the departments of the DoD.

As impact toward your future product, let me make some
personal observations, which are definitely not those of the
Agency. They are offered solely in the context of trying to
be helpful, and I believe are repetitive of our conversations
during the breaks. They are:

      ° A graphics capability would appear to be a
very important feature in any standard WP line that
we might buy in the future--not necessarily on all
the terminals, but on a good proportion of them.
This is not a TV-quality graphics, but rather a
"garden variety" type. Moderately good resolution
is needed however, significantly better than what you
see on a TRS-80 Model III screen, and on a par with
Apple's--about 500 lines I think. If color were
offered it need only be simple, like on a Cromenco,
not the 16 shades bit.

The need is to support the use of graphics in our reports. We probably average about one graphic every other page, and a fundamental aspect of our whole business of our product generation--reports-- is the incorporation of graphics that support the text. We need to see it in that context, scale it, and allow the right amount of space for it.

* Your dedication to BASIC creates problems in our environment. Any system we buy is going to be modified, enhanced, and required to support applications packages. We are not a first time user of EDP and our people are highly sophisticated in the development and applications of systems.

Taking a longer term prospective, I have trouble with BASIC in that it is an analyst's or amateur's language. It makes life very difficult in a large corporate environment in that it does not lend itself well to structured code, easily decipherable code, or readily maintainable systems. Inevitably, there will be a need to convert applications packages written in it when more powerful machinery is brought in, Converting Wang BASIC to a higher order language may present so great a problem that the applications packages would simply have to be scrapped.

If your WP systems supported some of the standard HOL's, it would be much more useful. I realize you are about to announce COBOL, which is a step in the right direction. COBOL is very labor intensive, however, and we need HOL's which provide greater productivity for the professional. I mentioned DoD's Ada to you as one we are following in this context with some interest.

° Because of the substantial file sizes that we deal with in much of our work, an ability to do other Boolean operations than "and" is of great value. We need to be able to search multiple words in close context, such as "Space Shuttle," and to do "or" and "not." Without these facilities, the ratio of irrelevant to relevant hits could be unacceptably high for many of our users. These facilities are primarily relevant to text search, of course. Your BASIC "and" capability meets most of the needs when the search is simply over the header data.

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Again, thank you for your interest in helping to meet the Agency's needs and in your effort in putting together that briefing.

Very truly yours,

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